

**Minutes of CRASC Meeting
April 22, 1999
Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center
Turners Falls, Massachusetts**

Agenda Items

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes from the Meeting on December 17, 1998

Chair Duncan McInnes called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

A quorum (simple majority) was present though the Connecticut Agency Commissioner, Massachusetts Public and Agency Commissioners, and Vermont Public Commissioner were absent when the meeting was called to order.

Mr. Charlie Thoits motioned to approve the Minutes from the last meeting, Mr. Jon Rittgers seconded and the Minutes were approved.

2. Agenda

Mr. McInnes proposed moving the Action Plan discussion to the end of the agenda and all agreed.

3. Report of the Executive Assistant

Ms. Janice Rowan provided a report on coordination activities and Commission administration (attached).

4. Report of the Technical Committee Chair

Mr. Jay McMenemy provided a report on Technical Committee and Subcommittee activities (attached). Additionally, draft minutes from the Fish Culturists Subcommittee meeting on April 16, 1999, are attached. The draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Holyoke Project is out for comment.

In the discussion that followed, Mr. McMenemy and Mr. Joe McKeon explained that the Merrimack program had reduced densities in some areas and discontinued stocking in others, effectively returning stocking to original levels. In the Connecticut, densities have not been an issue as we have expanded stocking into new habitat and adjusted densities based on index site survival.

Mr. McInnes commented that review and revision of the shad plan was in order.

Mr. Steve Gephard said that smolt stocking went well but that additional planning would be required to manage the larger numbers stocked next year. Mr. McInnes indicated that, with forewarning, NHFG could assist with distribution next year. The smolts were adipose clipped, and the next year class will be DNA marked, but we don't have the resources to CWT mark the fish though there may be benefits to doing so.

5. Other Business

American Heritage River

Ms. Whitty Sanford, Connecticut River Watershed Association, provided an American Heritage River update: as of last week, the Governors from CT, MA, NH, and VT had all signed the AHR Memorandum of Understanding to work in partnership with Federal, State, and local initiative partners. Additional agencies and local groups are expected to sign the MOU. Then, signing ceremonies are planned for the Governors to highlight the designation and specific projects. Projects relevant to the CRASC include a stream bank stabilization project and the anadromous fish restoration initiative.

A River Navigator will soon be hired by the EPA though the Navigator's work will be guided by the Federal Partners. Applicants were well qualified. River Pilots, the agency liaisons, have been selected (list attached).

Ms. Sanford inquired whether the CRASC would sign the MOU. The Commissioners wanted to see the MOU (some had not seen copies mailed in February), have the AHR initiative's relevance to the Connecticut River Salmon Compact spelled out, and then let their respective agency solicitor's review the proposal before agreeing to sign the MOU. The Coordinator was charged with supplying another copy of the MOU and reviewing the role for the CRASC.

Pre-fishery Abundance

Mr. Joe McKeon reported that pre-fishery abundance for next year's salmon returns is estimated at 83,000 fish. This figure is the lowest ever estimated and is not considered to be sufficient to meet recruitment in North American Rivers. It compares to the estimate for this year's return class which was 98,000 fish, and commercial takes a decade ago of 500,000 fish.

Mr. Bob Jones added that Canada had issued their harvest plan early this year and noted that it is quite conservative.

Other Info

Draft minutes from the Technical Committee meeting on April 15, 1999, are attached. Additionally, a report entitled *By-catch and Discards in the Atlantic Herring Fishery* is also attached. The report noted that blueback herring are by catch in the Atlantic herring fishery.

6. Action Plan Discussion

Ms. Janice Rowan commented that the draft Action Plan had been revised according to the recommendation made by Commissioners at the last CRASC meeting. The revised draft has been reformatted and the general substance is in place. The Technical Committee is looking for the Commissioners to endorse the format (and make substantive comments if applicable) before the subcommittee finalizes the draft for CRASC review.

The Commissioners appreciated that the Technical Committee had obviously done a lot of work. They said that improvements were a step in the right direction and that these efforts would not go to waste. They suggested that the draft Action Plan and Work Plan be revised for 1999 and presented at the next CRASC meeting, realizing that the documents are dynamic and that a new Work Plan will be developed for 2000 and presented in the spring.

Specific comments follow:

- ▶ Date both the Action Plan and Work Plan
- ▶ Utilize the Priority column on the Work Plan to reference specific sites in the Action Plan since it does not reflect actual priorities
- ▶ View the Action Plan as a guide, use the Work Plan to identify performance accomplishments, and consider the Work Plan as the accomplishment reporting scale
- ▶ Quantify as many performance measures as possible realizing that it may be easier to quantify some after the fact
- ▶ Consider changes in the format that would reduce the size of tabs to save space and print the document on both sides of the page to reduce the overall volume
- ▶ Be specific about costs and funding sources on new actions/initiatives
- ▶ Guard against using this document to do things that might better be done elsewhere
- ▶ Consistently use Resources Needed/Resources Available in both documents following the meaning established in the Work Plan; it will simplify the Action Plan since additional resources needed for ongoing activities will be N/A
- ▶ Provide a Table of Contents for the Action Plan
- ▶ Number the pages
- ▶ New Actions needed on the Work Plan table should be specific to each agency
- ▶ Resources needed in Action Plan should be as specific as possible, number of man days or persons, for example, required of each specific agency
- ▶ Once the agency responsibilities are identified, the Technical Committee representative will meet with their respective agency Commissioners to review the assignments and make sure that the agencies are in sync with the plans, then the plans can be presented to the CRASC as information rather than as something to approve
- ▶ Technical Committee Chair should present new Work Plan each spring followed by accomplishments in the fall

Mr. Bob Jones motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Wayne MacCallum seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at noon.

CRASC Meeting Attendance

Janice Rowan	USFWS
Steve Gephard	CTDEP/Fisheries
Jay McMenemy	VTFW
Duncan McInnes	NHFG
Steve Rideout	USFWS
Caleb Slater	MAFW
Tim Hess	VTFW
Annemarie Averill	USFWS
Michelle Babione	USFWS
Larry Lofton	USFWS
Joe McKeon	USFWS
John Warner	USFWS
Sherry Morgan	USFWS
Robert A. Jones	CT Public Representative
Charles Thoits III	NH Public Representative
Dick Bell	CT River Salmon Assoc.
Jim Carroll	CT River Salmon Assoc.
Michael Parker	MAEOEA
Henry Wardlich	Millers River Watershed Council
Bob Stira	Northeast Utilities Service Co.
Rose & Warren Fisher	Volunteers
Darren Desmarais	USFWS
Jon Rittgers	NMFS
Wayne MacCallum	MAFW